

MINAM

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PROPOSAL TO INCLUDE THE MINAM RIVER IN SECTION 5(d) CATEGORY UNDER THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT

The Minam River and its related adjacent land in Oregon possesses remarkable and outstanding scenic and recreational values. The Minam River should be evaluated in planning reports by all Federal agencies as potential wild, scenic, or recreational rivers under Section 5(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The limits of the river reach referred to are:

Minam River: The entire river (46 miles).

The Minam River is a stream approximately 46 miles in length from its origin at Minam Lake within the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest to its terminus with the Wallowa River at the town of Minam. This river in its present free-flowing state, offers some beautiful and spectacular recreational and scenic attractions. The majority of the river is accessible to any individual who is willing to meet the challenge of packing into remote back country and wilderness. Approximately 35 miles of trail immediately adjacent to the river offers the traveler unique opportunities for scenic and recreational enjoyment. There are numerous meadows and flat places along the stream that provide frequent opportunities for campsites. The lower 10 miles of the river from the confluence with the Wallowa River upstream to the National Forest boundary is roaded and provides satisfactory access for fishing and recreational pursuits. The end of the road is a jump off into the back country and wilderness areas upstream.

In its present free-flowing state the Minam is a productive fishery habitat and produces some high quality stream fishing. The main river itself and its tributaries support both resident and anadromous species of fish. The river is famous for its excellent Rainbow and Eastern Brook trout fishing. It is an important stream in its free-flowing state as spawning grounds for anadromous species of steelhead and salmon.

Mule deer, elk, various predators, waterfowl, black bear, fisher, upland birds, bald and golden eagles inhabit the Minam River drainage. The main drainage itself and its principal tributaries offer some of the finest deer and elk hunting to be found in the State of Oregon. In its present undeveloped state it presents outstanding challenges to the sportsman pursuing this type of recreation.

From Minam Lake downstream for approximately 15 miles the area is within the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Approximately eight additional miles of the river immediately below the existing wilderness boundary is within the present Forest Service proposal for eventual inclusion within the Eagle Cap Wilderness. From here downstream to the Forest boundary the area is included in a management composite that will preclude development of access roads and generally will retain the existing area in its present condition with management direction aimed at recreation and scenic values. From the forest boundary downstream to its confluence with the Wallowa River land ownership is predominantly private.

With the exception of the lower section of the river the Minam River fully meets the criteria for designation as a wild river. It is therefore recommended that the Minam River in its entirety be included in the select list of rivers to be evaluated in planning reports by all Federal agencies as potential wild, scenic, or recreational rivers under Section 5(d) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.